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New York. Chamber of Commerce of the state...

Abstract of proceedings... Joseph Hodges Choate

[S.l.]

[1917]

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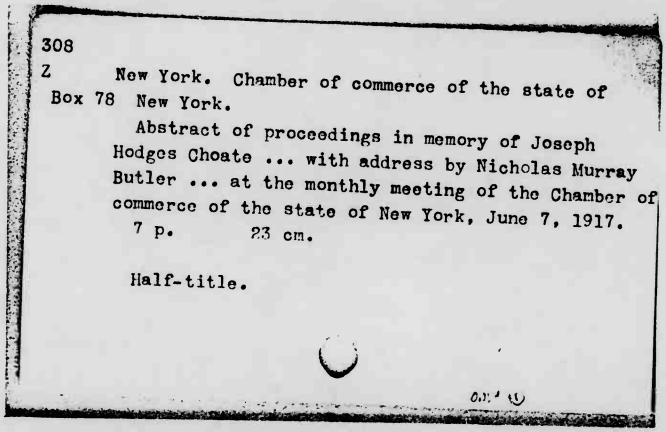

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ABSTRACT OF PROCEEDINGS

IN MEMORY OF

JOSEPH HODGES CHOATE

AN HONORARY MEMBER OF THE CHAMBER

WITH ADDRESS BY

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER, LL.D.

AT THE

MONTHLY MEETING

OF THE

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK

JUNE 7, 1917

20 April 1920 Jnw

Monthly Meeting, Thursday, June 7, 1917

A regular monthly meeting of the Chamber of Commerce was held in the Hall of the Chamber on Thursday, June 7, 1917, at twelve o'clock, noon.

PRESENT

EUGENIUS H. OUTERBRIDGE, *President*
ALFRED E. MARLING, *Vice-President*
CHARLES T. GWYNNE, *Secretary*

and two hundred and ninety-two other members of the Chamber.

ACTION IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH H. CHOATE

WELDING RING, Chairman of the Executive Committee, moved that in order that appropriate action might be taken in memory of the late JOSEPH H. CHOATE, an Honorary Member of the Chamber, the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting be omitted and that the regular order of business be suspended.

The motion was unanimously carried.

MR. RING, on behalf of the Committee, then read the following Minute and moved that it be adopted:

JOSEPH HODGES CHOATE

JOSEPH HODGES CHOATE was elected an honorary member of the Chamber of Commerce, May 4, 1905, on his return from England where for six years he had filled with great distinction the position of Ambassador to the Court of St. James.

MR. CHOATE was a type of American admired and loved by all and his memory will be treasured by thousands who did not even know him personally.

In him the noblest traits of character were blended with culture and refinement which, combined with mental attributes of wit and humor, and temperamental and physical charms and gentleness, made his presence remarkable in any company and his influence truly world-wide.

The simple and rugged virtues of democracy were in him clothed with a courtliness and courtesy of manner indicative of an old school unfortunately passing away.

The new and mechanical means of communication, the pressure and high tension of modern business and industrial life which tend to obliterate the more graceful amenities of earlier periods, never caused him to relax the grace and courtesy which was inherent in his very nature, and yet no man was more signally abreast of his times, more forward-looking to the future development and influence of his country than he.

The services which he rendered to the Nation in his official life, to the profession in which he was such a distinguished leader, to the City where he lived, cannot be recounted here and will form a brilliant theme for the historian, but the last publicly spoken words of his life were delivered in the Library of this Chamber at the luncheon tendered to the British Commission, when, in closing the function, he related in one of his most delightful strains of reminiscence, stories of his official and personal relations with Lord Salisbury, then England's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, MR. BALFOUR'S uncle, and traced his characteristics as they had been inherited by and showed in the career of MR. BALFOUR, the guest of the day.

It is fitting that in grateful memory of MR. CHOATE, our revered honorary member, this Chamber should spread this Minute on its records, expressing thereby its sense of loss to the country and community, and its sympathy with the bereaved family.

Resolved, That this Minute be spread on the Minute Book of the Chamber and that an engrossed copy thereof be sent to MRS. CHOATE.

ADDRESS OF NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER, LL.D.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CHAMBER.—In one sense any word in support or explanation of this motion is quite

unnecessary. The admirable statement which has been read on behalf of the Executive Committee sets out in succinct fashion those traits of MR. CHOATE and those relationships of his to this Chamber and to the City on which we most love to dwell; and they are themselves reflected and echoed in the heart and mind, not only of every member of this Chamber, but of every citizen of New York.

We all feel that a great oak has fallen in the forest of our public life, and of our private friendships. That great oak fell, not when its leaves had gone and its branches were bare and it had lost its beauty, but it fell at the very height of its perfection, of its usefulness and of its charm. It was still putting out new branches; its leaves were yet green; its roots struck daily deeper into the soil of our affections; then suddenly, in obedience to the inexorable law of life which is death, it came to its beautiful end.

This Chamber pauses for a moment in the midst of a busy day to record its sense of appreciation and its sense of loss in the going out from its membership and from our citizenship of a truly great and noble and inspiring figure, whose place cannot be filled, but whose example may well serve as a model and an ideal for those who are younger and those who are yet to come.

It is no mean thing, gentlemen, to have great types of citizenship to which we may look up. We are all so concerned with the routine activity of our daily occupations, we are all so bound to the wheel of industry and commerce and finance, that we sometimes fail to take note of that which is going on before our very eyes, and which at other epochs of history, in other lands and on other stages than ours, has been the theme of poets and historians and prophets. A great, fine, useful personality, understanding and loving the principles of this nation, expounding and extolling them with singular felicity and grace on every suitable occasion, carrying himself always unsullied from the world, is one of the highest products of a democracy. Such a nature, such a service, such a repute are things which in a democracy must be achieved. They cannot be gained by birth; they cannot come by favor; they cannot even be conferred by the franchise of grateful and applauding fellow citizens. They must be earned by a steady, silent, persuasive appeal of character, intellect and service, extending over long years, an appeal both to our minds and to our hearts. That appeal MR. CHOATE began to make long years ago. The singular beauty of his form, of his character and of his speech, the unusual grace of his bearing and of his utterance, the combination of urbanity with force, of wit with eloquence, of delicate perception with wisdom,

of lightness of touch with legal scholarship, made a combination rare enough at any time, and singularly rare in this community amidst the haste and the bustle of our modern life.

Somewhere in one of his incomparable *Lives*, the ancient historian PLUTARCH remarks that the first condition of successful victory in any cause is to take courage. MR. CHOATE invariably taught us to take courage. I do not remember a depressed or a depressing word from his lips. In times of doubt, of difficulty, of wide difference of opinion, in times even of public danger he was always serene, always confident, always full of hope and patriotism, always convinced that the better side of America and the better side of a cause in contest would securely triumph. He carried to us always and everywhere that fine and sterling message of courage and confidence, courage for the triumph of sound principles, confidence in the triumph of character and of intelligence, which are the outgrowth of a convinced and an abiding faith in democracy.

It was my fortune to sit with MR. CHOATE a few hours before his death when, surrounded by a group of intimate friends—among them MR. BALFOUR and the eminent philosopher of France, M. BERGSON—he propounded to them for discussion the question of the immortality of the soul. As I think of it now it seems almost as if that charming spirit, so rich in experience, so full of service, so crowned with applause and honor of men of two worlds, that that spirit had a prescience that it was soon to go; and feeling so confident of a life that was to follow, was quizzically anxious to know what those who were younger had to say about it. Then, on the following day, at the close of a notable service in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, MR. CHOATE stood for a moment at the door and took MR. BALFOUR'S hand in his to bid him good-bye. They were not to meet again on this visit; they were not to meet again, although neither knew it then, on this earth. MR. CHOATE'S last words to MR. BALFOUR, spoken in the hearing of some of us were: "Remember, we meet again to celebrate the victory." They were the last words that MR. BALFOUR heard him speak. They were the last words that most of us, not of his immediate family, heard him speak, and they were singularly significant of his full end. "We shall meet again to celebrate the victory"—the victory in that cause in which his whole heart and soul were engaged! But may we not feel this morning that we are free to interpret that victory in a larger and still more personal sense? Are we not meeting again to celebrate the victory, the victory of that for which MR. CHOATE stood, the victory of that which MR. CHOATE

represented, the victory of that which MR. CHOATE *was* over the meaner, the smaller, the more sordid and the less admirable traits of human nature? And does not this Chamber, with its noble traditions and its splendid membership, meet again this morning to celebrate with him the victory? [Applause.]

The Minute was unanimously adopted by a rising vote.

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